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P-Freed, Donald
Sec. 4.01.4 Inquest

'Inquest' Reexamines Rosenberg Spy Case

By DOUGLAS WATT

(Reprinted from yesterday's late editions)

"Inquest," which came to the stage of the Music Box last evening, is a disturbing document, as it was meant to be. But I found this reexamination of the circumstances that led to the execution of the Rosenbergs on June 19, 1953, for conspiring to commit espionage disturbing in more ways than the author obviously intended.

On the terms of the author, Donald Freed, who has drawn his material from "Invitation to an Inquest," a book by Walter and Miriam Schneir, it is disturbing because it suggests not only that Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were innocent of the charge but that they were railroaded to the chair.

If the latter is true, then the international clamor generated by the case, which occurred during an unfortunately hysterical period in our history, was justified and so is any new scrutiny of the situation:

Me, the Jury

But consider my terms. A devout believer in justice after the fact, I sit in a darkened theater where I, along with all others of the audience, am assigned the role of juror.

Excerpts from the trial in the U.S. District Court are performed for me, as well as "reconstructions" of episodes outside the court, including some scenes of the Rosenbergs at home. At intervals, still photos showing Hiroshima victims, a smiling President Eisenhower at golf or accepting an honorary degree, a pugnacious-looking J. Edgar Hoover, a saintly looking Ein-

"INQUEST"
Play by Donald Freed, produced by Lee Guber and Shelly Gross at the Music Box, April 23, 1970.

THE PRINCIPALS

Ethel Rosenberg	_____	Anne Jackson
Julius Rosenberg	_____	George Grizzard
Emanuel Bloch	_____	James Whitmore
Irving Saypol	_____	Mason Adams
Roy Cohn	_____	Mike Burstein
Judge Kaufman	_____	Michael Lipton
David Greenglass	_____	Jack Hollander
Harry Gold	_____	Phil Leeds
Ruth Greenglass	_____	Hildy Brooks

stein and others are projected on the back wall along with appropriate quotations.

And the live people up there are actors. Michael Lipton's Judge Kaufman is a supercilious magistrate. Mason Adams' Irving Saypol is a bullying prosecuting attorney and his assistant, Mike Burstein's Roy Cohn is—well, you all know Roy Cohn.

Likable Actors

But Anne Jackson and George Grizzard, the Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, and James Whitmore, their attorney Emanuel Bloch, are obviously lovable people. Whereas Jack Hollander's David Greenglass is a big, shifty slob and Phil Leeds' Harry Gold is a plain nut. And so it goes until we are finally presented with the actual execution, the electric chair descreetly facing away from us in Alan Schneider's generally able direction.

One doesn't dare be bored by



George Grizzard and Anne Jackson (below) and James Whitmore
As the Rosenbergs and their lawyer

a play which raises such important issues. Nevertheless, I found it often tiresome theater, on which final term it must be judged, and guilty of nonobjective reporting of its serious subject.

The theater can accommodate almost any subject and one such as this can be presented with such force in no other place. But whatever the kind of theater being offered, from mindless comedy to profound tragedy, there is one inviolable rule: it must be completely honest on its own terms.

"Inquest" is not and falls inescapably into the category of the propaganda play, thus demeaning its subject.